Hunt for Ray Futile

By CARL T. ROWAN

WASHINGTON — The disappearance of the slayer of Dr Martin Luther King becomes more eerie and revolting with every passing day.

Rowan

The FBI has not come up with a single meaningful trace of James Earl Ray, the Number 1 suspect, since I revealed several weeks ago that the investigation had taken on international implications.

Even with $100,000 or so of reward money lying around, the FBI hasn't so much as a hot tip or a rumor worth pursuing with hope.

In my earlier column, I deliberately did not reveal that a massive dragnet had been set up in Mexico. It was there that Ray had met with some characters who led FBI and other intelligence agents to suspect involvement of a foreign power. But investigators did not want the suspect tipped off as to the intensity of the search south of the border.

But it has revealed nothing.

"WE'VE COVERED Mexico, Canada, and the United States like a blanket," one high-level source tells me. "If Ray were alive in any of these places, I can't conceive of our not locating him by now."

Thus, the men who were clinging doggedly to the theory that King's killer was a berserk loner have now swung over to the belief that a hired killer planned the murder and the escape meticulously. But was it Ray — or were the seemingly clumsy clues left behind just decoys? And who did the hiring?

The truth is that the FBI has not located a single trace of Ray since he supposedly abandoned his white Mustang in Atlanta on April 5, the day after the Nobel Prize-winning Negro clergyman was slain in a Memphis, Tenn, motel. In fact, the FBI does not really have solid evidence that it was Ray who abandoned the car in Atlanta.

BUT THE massive investigation has turned up more information about Ray and his family. The most significant — and most galling in some Washington circles — is that Ray was peddling dope while in prison in Missouri State Penitentiary from 1960 to April 1967.

As the magnitude of Ray's narcotics peddling has been revealed, top law enforcement officers here have started aghast at the evidence that guards in most prisons are so easily bribed into sending almost anything into or out of a prison.

Some investigators have concluded that our penal system is rotten to the core, and they have sent screams to the top of our government that it is high time someone planned a complete overhaul.

A SERIOUS question arises now as to how long the FBI can, or will, continue a concentrated search for Dr King's killer. Already, student turmoil on scores of campuses has dictated the shifting of considerable manpower to the watching of those activities.

There are some worrisome connections between rioters on the various campuses. For example, one of the leaders of the Columbia University demonstrations recently showed up at American University here, trying to agitate students into putting some "muscle" into their protest.

So this confluence of demands on agents' time has led even some FBI personnel to each earlier pessimistic predictions that "they'll never catch Dr King's killer."

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